

UPDATE

Foot and Mouth

Archaeologists throughout the country have had to postpone fieldwork this season as access to farmland is restricted. However other areas of research are available and I suspect that air photographs, maps, documentary evidence and other forms of research will receive more attention from archaeologists this year.

The Foot and Mouth crisis has prevented us from organizing any outdoor activities this summer and has meant the cancellation of our spring walk. We will keep members informed if the circumstances change in the near future. We have also had to postpone our trip to the Kilmartin Valley. Our new season of talks will begin in October.

Reports

In February Mary Atkin gave an interesting talk about field names and a report by our secretary, Phyllis Rouston, is included overleaf. The April walk may have been cancelled but you can follow it in your imagination on page 3, as it appears here in written form instead. Once the crisis is over I strongly recommend a visit to this fascinating prehistoric landscape.

The subjects of the eight papers at this conference in Morpeth on the 28 April ranged from a late Mesolithic (7500BC) site on the coast to an update on environmental evidence for the prehistoric in the North to three Iron Age sites in Cleveland. These later excavations in advance of developments further confirmed modern ideas that in the late Iron Age the country was heavily populated – the only area where such digs are not happening is Cumbria!

The papers also demonstrated the techniques used in modern archaeology including "freezing drying" a cremation in situ in order to lift it whole and excavate it in the laboratory. A technique which was not available at Allithwaite (near Grange over Sands) where several Bronze Age burials in collared urns had been placed in natural hollows in underlying limestone, here the traditional 'all hands around the urn and lift and hope' worked well.

There were two long term projects – a multidiscipline

landscape study in the north of Northumberland and a more localised study in Weardale. The first project is an example of how interrelated the different skills of geology, environment, landscape and archaeology are deployed to study an "untouched" area before a spade bites the ground while the second was a more traditional approach based on excavation in a wild landscape that revealed occupation from the Neolithic to the 19th century.

Northumberland County Council also showed off its superior archaeological service (over Cumbria, that is) by describing plans to record all the rock art in the county; they also gave away an excellent annual report FREE.

In the car coming home we talked about how we can get more members to these conferences which are a good way to learn about archaeology and mingle with real "hands-on" people – any ideas?

Harry Hawkins

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Field Names and Field Shapes in Westmorland

The February meeting was well attended and those present enjoyed an interesting talk on field Shapes and Names

Mary Atkin of Levens began with a number of field names such as Misery Field, Purgatory Field, Dear Bought, names given to fields which were unproductive. Kiss Arse (1770) was the name of a field on a very steep slope. Did someone fall on their backside? Another was Tyche Yng, an earlier name (1538), and possibly meaning a small field. The spelling was often inconsistent as names would have been transcribed to early maps from the spoken word.

She explained how by looking at field shapes, their locations and names it is possible to understand how land was used in the past. References to Appleby and Kentmere were used as illustrations.

Narrow strip fields with gently curving boundaries are indicative of medieval arable use. Enclosures destroyed the strips, particularly the land enclosures following an Act of Parliament, and the fields became larger and rectilinear. The gently curving boundaries are the result of the ploughing techniques of the time. Lanes and hedgerows may show this curve. Wynd was the command to the oxen to turn at the headland and this word is found in street names such as High Wiend in Appleby.

Other evidence of cultivation is seen in ridge and furrow patterns. Ploughing techniques achieved a mound or ridge 15-18 feet wide with

furrows on either side to provide drainage and sometimes boundary marks. These features are often most obvious after light snow when the snow fills the furrow. A lovely slide was shown of buttercups delineating the ridges in a field at Hart-sop. The distance between the furrows depended on the length of the goad used for urging on the oxen, hence the old measurement of rod, perch or pole.



Medieval Ridge and Furrow

New Towns of the Middle Ages were then described. Appleby, planned around 1110-1120, Warkworth and Ludlow are examples of new towns built to plan on arable strips. Features included a castle and a church at either end, a wide street for a market, (Boroughgate in Appleby) with burgage plots and lanes leading off following the strip field pattern.

The people's needs whether of town or hamlet were met from the adjacent land. Essential requirements would be arable areas for food crops and hay, pasture for grazing, woodland, turbary for peat and turf and bracken for thatch and bedding. The different areas may be identified by studying the field patterns and names.

A number of names may refer to the same type of land and these vary from one locality to another. Examples used in Cumbrian upland dales were discussed. Low lying meadow may be indicated by ing, dale, fit and moss. Moving uphill to arable land terms include bank, rig and hagg. Some of the words used to describe woodland are coppice, middling, stubbing and thwaite and for pasture, grassing and park. The top moor might be named fell, common, or if their was turbary, moss.

Slides showing views and maps of Kentmere were used to illustrate many of the names and features. An interesting feature that was easily seen from the slides was a number of funnel shaped pathways widening as they reached the pasture. This shape would have helped in gathering in the stock when the animals were driven back down from the pasture.

Mary Atkin concluded her enjoyable and informative talk by citing several cases where there had been disputes over land usage and ownership.

Phyllis Rouston

Bronze Age Burial Cairns on Askham Fell

The Moor Divock monuments are all that remain of a Bronze Age cemetery, occupying a flat area of land overlooking lake Ullswater on Askham Fell.

They have attracted the attention of local archaeologists for some time. In the Nineteenth century they were visited on several occasions by the Canons W Greenwell and J Simpson (one time vicar of Shap) who dug into several of the monuments in 1866 seeking evidence of burials. In 1886 M W Taylor published his record of the monuments in the Transactions of the CWAAS. He claimed to have identified a total of 11 small stone circles, cairns and cairn circles along with a 'serpentine avenue of low stones' approximately 500m long. Later in 1934 J E Spence identified a settlement site to the west of the circles consisting of hut circles and tumuli. Presumably belonging to the Bronze Age inhabitants who were buried here.

The Monuments Today

As you approach the monuments from the road you are greeted by the Cop Stone, the first sign that you are entering a prehistoric landscape. It is a large standing stone visible for some distance in all directions. Taylor claimed that it was part of a stone circle with a diameter of 17.4m but there is no sign now of other surviving stones.

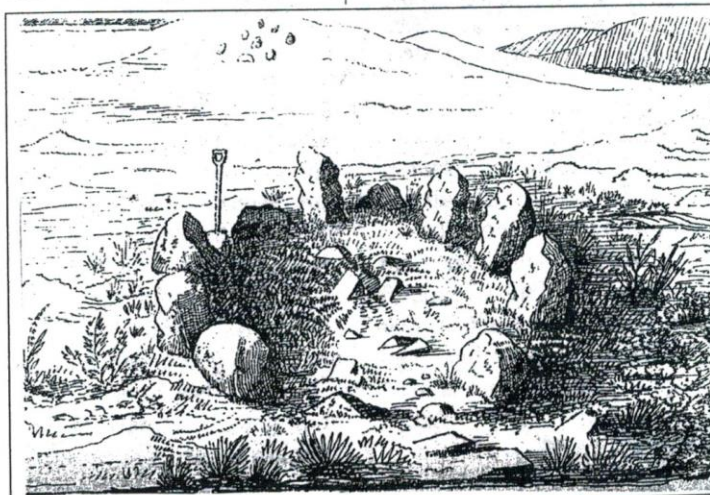
It is level walking as you follow the track to the north west. If it is summer you will have to look out for the first monument as much of the ground is covered by bracken. It

soon appears just to the right of the track and consists of an impressive cairn circle of 10 large standing stones set in a low bank. This encloses a burial cairn excavated by Green well and Simpson and seen now as a hollow in the centre of the monument. They discovered fragments of burnt bone belonging to an adult and a Yorkshire Food Vessel dating the burial to between 2000-1500BC. Cremation was a common Bronze Age burial practice and it seems likely that the monument was created as a burial place for someone of importance to the local community.

As you walk you catch glimpses of odd stones here and there and wonder whether the 'serpentine avenue' mentioned by Taylor could have been a reality. To the west is the area identified as a settlement by Spence but the structures there now are mostly the result of the recent construction of hides for

grouse shooting. Much stone robbing must have taken place for this purpose and seems to be the reason behind the loss of some of the monuments.

The next notable cairn, again on the right of the track consists of three large stones within a cairn of smaller stones. Here a Collared Urn was excavated confirming an early Bronze Age date for the monument. An earlier burial practice for this period was the 'crouched burial' where an individual was buried on his/her side in a foetal position very often within a stone cist. We can see an example of this at White Raise, a large cairn hidden by bracken further down the track. If you climb on top of this cairn you will find an exposed cist made up of large flat stones. Taylor described this as a 'star fish cairn' because of its outer shape. It is a rather fanciful descriptive term which, as far as I know, has not been taken up by any other archaeolo-



Drawing of 'The Standing Stones, Muirdivock' by Taylor, 1886

gist! We do not know who was responsible for exposing the burial or what was found here but it is not uncommon for such burials to be accompanied by early bronze objects and the distinctive Beaker pottery which defines the early Bronze Age.

Soon after leaving this monument you reach a junction in the track. Taking the left turn leads you to the Cockpit (do not be tempted to take a shortcut here as you will find yourself stuck in a rather nasty bog). The Cockpit is a stone circle of low stones 26m in diameter. The stones appear to be set into a wide bank and there is a possible cairn on the eastern side. It is not a large circle like Castlerigg or other Cumbrian circles but a rather smaller circle clearly linked to the nearby cairns. The site probably provided the ceremonial focus for rituals linked to burial and other rites performed by the local inhabitants. There are clear views over Ullswater from here which is surely an important part of the setting of this site.

There have been no known excavations here but A Burl, the renowned authority on stone circles dates it to the same Early Bronze Age period, 2000 to 1500BC. He sees these monuments as a 'familial cemetery

used over several generations with ritual and sepulchral monuments intermixed'.

Prehistoric people were clearly living, working and farming on the fell here for some time. When important members of the community died they were buried with all the respect and ceremony their families could provide.

The monuments, though reduced in number, are still impressive today and well deserve a visit.

Martin Railton

BURL, A 'The Stone Circles of Britain, Ireland and Brittany' 2000
SPENCE, JE TCWAAS 1886 vol VIII
TAYLOR, MW 'Prehistoric Remains

Contributions to the newsletter are always welcome. If you have a favorite site or subject you could include as an article please contact the editor, Martin Railton, at the address below.

DIARY

Rebuilding the Past BUILDINGS AND HISTORY

SAT 16th JUNE

A day conference on house research, architectural heritage and conservation is being held by the Centre for North-West Regional Studies at Lancaster

University. Cost £13

Contact the centre on

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